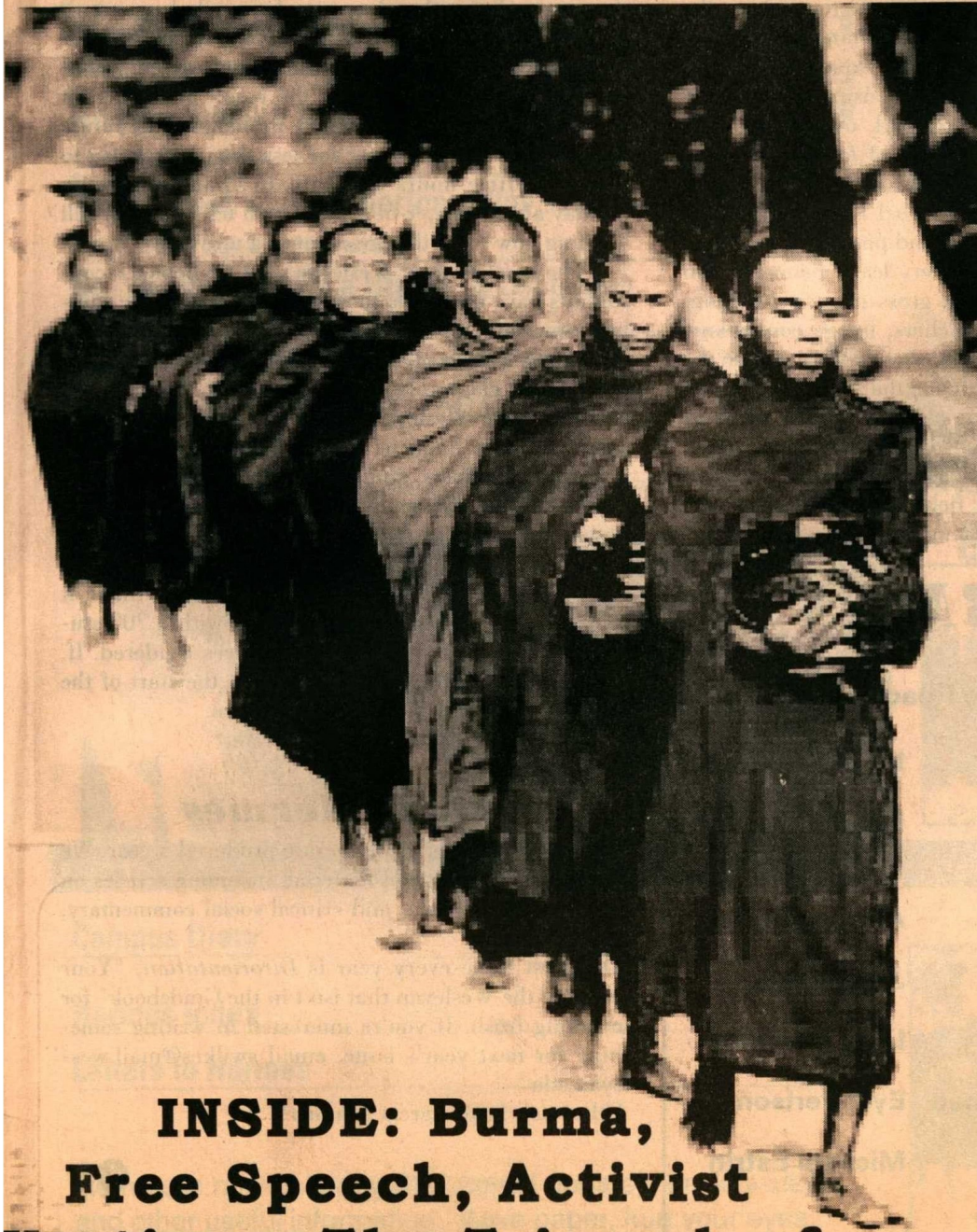


MAY 1998

HERMES

WESLEYAN'S MAGAZINE OF POLITICAL, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE THOUGHT



**INSIDE: Burma,
Free Speech, Activist
Vactions, The Triumph of
the American Way, and
much, much more!**



Getting On the Offensive

A few weeks ago, as I was passing around a petition to stop the segregation of dorms by class year, somebody remarked "Wow, we're really good at stopping things at Wesleyan." It hit home. Lately, we've been fighting against a lot without fighting for anything in particular. With that kind of approach, the best we can hope to achieve is . . . nothing at all.

We're at a point in Wesleyan's history where the school is changing for good, and changing in ways most students don't like. With the expansion of Res-Life agents into apartments and housing clusters, the harsh new party policy, and talk of making RAs enforcers, we're seeing the return of *in loco parentis*. Doug Bennet's strong-arm tactics with Cheryl Cutler reveal a changing attitude toward the faculty—this school's most valuable asset—and possibly a new hostility toward the arts. At the very least, Bennet's plan for the 21st century shows a gross misprioritization, ranking buildings before teachers, image consultants before financial aid. What seems to concern people the most, however, is the new image the school's trying to sell. The Independent Ivy is a school that most of us didn't want to come to, but as the admissions office steps up the recruitment of football players, reroutes tours through more athletic fields, and prints that infamous slogan on literature going out to prospective stu-

dents, we're changing the body of students we attract. And the best the students have managed is an uncoordinated, collective 'No!'

The problem is, we need to say 'yes' to something. Doug Bennet was appointed president to pull this school out of a financial crisis and get it back on its feet . . . which he did with grace and finesse. The question now is: where do we go from here? He's still running the university like a business, when most of us would like to see it go back to being a school. Most of the new policies that have students riled up aren't malicious so much as misconceived, misguided, or malprioritized. The recent dorms-by-class-year debacle, for instance, was simply the result of having an all-new Residential Life staff try to plan out the future of a school they've been at for less than a year. Go to Bennet's office hours to complain about something (Friday afternoons, 4-6PM) and he'll tell you "I'm still learning how to be the president of a university."

The best vision of Wesleyan's future Bennet's consultants have been able to come up with is a new campus center and an official slogan. It seems like the best the faculty's been able to come up with is more computer-aided classes. Now it's up to us to get behind a real future for Wesleyan. More faculty positions right away, stronger financial aid packages, socially-aware investment policies, student freedom and autonomy. Ethnic Studies. Queer Studies. Substance, not image. Resources, not infrastructure. And whether or not the administration buys into that vision, the moment we can articulate it and get behind it, we can make it come true. There's not much arguing with 2,700 students who are paying you for services rendered. If, say, 2,000 of us refused to register at the start of the semester, we could shut the school down.

Brian Edwards-Tiekert

HERMES

Hits the Road

Enviro-Tourist	Laura Clawson
New Age Traveller	Brian Edwards-Tiekert
Eurotrash	Aongus Burke
Phishy Dead Head	Josh Kagan
Enviro-Terrorist	Livia Gershon
Door to Door Salesman	Eyal Perlson
Hobo	Michael Estrin
Birkenstocks, Hemp Jewelry, Patchwork Dresses-and-Dreadlocks "I live in a VW bus" Type.	Daniel Young

About Hermes

About seven issues of *Hermes* are produced a year. We publish a wide range of material, including articles on campus life, activism, and critical social commentary. And humor too.

Our first issue every year is *Dirorientation*, "Your Guide to the Wesleyan that isn't in the Guidebook" for incoming frosh. If you're interested in writing something for next year's issue, email swilkes@mail.wesleyan.edu

Otherwise, have a great summer!



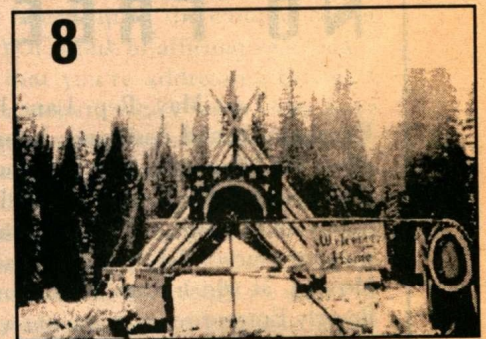
All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Hermes staff.

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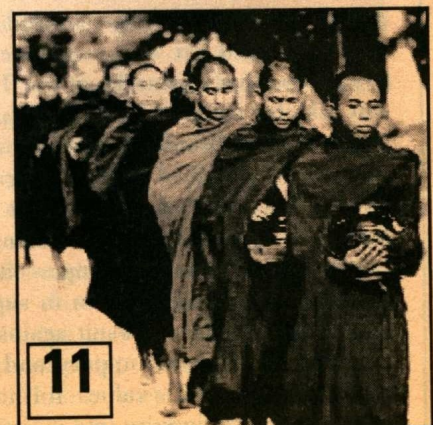
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<http://www.con.wesleyan.edu/groups/hermes>

Cover design by Your Mother



Free Speech In Academia and the problem with Progressives

At SUNY Purchase last Thursday, a professor named Susan Lehrer

by Brian Edwards Tiekert

spoke about a conference she'd organized last Fall at SUNY New Paltz—"Revolt in Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom." A brief history: the conference came under fire in a column in the Wall Street Journal. SUNY trustee Candace de Russy (who hadn't attended) said the "lurid" conference "degenerat[ed]" into a platform for lesbian sex, public sadomasochism, anal sex, bisexuality, and masturbation." George Pataki, New York's Republican governor, used it as an excuse to launch yet another attack on the state university system, and the conference became a national media event and a *cause celebre* for academic freedom.

What struck me about her speech was how defensive she acted. She spent a long time denying the lurid picture of the conference conservatives had painted—this to an audience of students and faculty that needed no convincing to doubt conservatives, and wouldn't have cared if the conference was everything they said and more. She spent more more time

talking about what she hadn't done then about what she actually had. Clearly, she'd suffered enough polemics against militant lesbians in academia causing the downfall of Western civilization that some part of her couldn't help looking at the conference through the less than rose-tinted glasses of her attackers—she'd gotten to the point where that image was the one she felt she had to answer to.

It struck me harder in another part of the lecture: "Across the country, we're seeing attacks on AIDS education and safer sex education in high schools. We're seeing this in spite of national studies showing that because of these programs, teenagers are having safer sex and fewer unwanted pregnancies—without having more sex overall."

Without having more sex overall. She emphasized it. She said it like that was the most important part of the study. As if sex between teenagers was automatically bad, and the only point of sex ed was damage control. As if her conference hadn't included workshops titled "Teens Talk about Sexuality," and

(continued on next page)

NO FREE SPEECH FOR LABOR

Last May, Rep. Lane Evans (D-Ill) introduced the Federal Procurement and Assistance Integrity Act in Congress. The bill would allow the labor secretary the power to prevent companies with a pattern of violations of the National Labor Relations Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, or the Fair Labor Standards Act from receiving federal contracts. A few days after the bill was introduced, Rep. Evans and several members of Congress from Pennsylvania sponsored a Congressional Town Meeting, at which Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research at Cornell University, testified that Beverly Enterprises, a company which operates over 750 nursing homes, has a pattern of serious labor violations: "Beverly stood out in my findings," she said, "both for the high level of union activity at Beverly Enterprises facilities and for the consistency and intensity of their union avoidance efforts."

by Laura Clawson

Beverly has been found by the National Labor Relations Board (not, historically, a rabidly pro-union organization) to have committed more than 135 unfair labor practices; in a recent decision, an NLRB Administrative Law Judge concluded that Beverly's "wide-ranging and persistent misconduct, demonstrates a general disregard for the employees' fundamental rights." Despite this rather impressive background for Bronfenbrenner's remarks at the Town Hall meeting, the company has filed a defamation suit against her. The suit asks for compensatory and punitive damages of at least \$225,000 and, as part of the discovery process, for access to all of Bronfenbrenner's research materials, including confidential interviews and survey data.

A suit filed against a Service Employees International Union employee for testimony at the meeting has already been thrown out of court on the grounds that testimony before Congress is protected from litigation. Beverly is appealing that decision, since the testimony was given only at an event sponsored by members of Congress and not before Congress itself; they are therefore continuing their suit against Bronfenbrenner.

An e-mail petition in support of Bronfenbrenner circulated briefly, gathering over 600 signatures; it argued that "filing a lawsuit against Dr. Bronfenbrenner under these circumstances is an affront to the Congress, an insult to academic inquiry and a disgrace to the legal profession. It undermines our legislative process and important democratic values. It is intended to send a warning to Dr. Bronfenbrenner and to other academics not to engage in honest inquiry into topics a powerful corporation finds unpleasant." As Beverly's lawsuits continue, even in the face of court decisions against them, it is clear that we must take all possible steps to make them deeply uncomfortable.



"Eroticizing Safer Sex." Why should someone like her care if teenagers take home the condoms they get in health class, put them to good use, and—God forbid—enjoy themselves in the process?

Again, she was addressing the opposition even when they weren't in the room. Every attack on sex ed has cited the fear that sex ed encourages sex: that the minute a health teacher unrolls a condom over a cucumber in class, his/her students will go home and start fucking like bunnies. She bought into the moral equation sex=bad to make her argument—she lost the debate before it started.

You can see it anywhere: opponents of the death penalty cite the fact that it takes more money to execute someone than to keep them in prison for the rest of their life—to accommodate them, conservatives try to reduce costs by crippling the appeals system. Pacifists pushing for a ban on handguns state that people who own them are more likely to shoot somebody in their family than a burglar—the NRA pushes for gun training and practice-ranges. Never mind that you can't put a price on human life and if someone breaks into your house you should call the cops instead of firing off rounds—economic benefit and vigilante justice are the principles progressives began by appealing to, and the ones they'll lose by.

A major problem with progressive activism today is that it isn't progressive—it's defensive. We don't stand up for *our* values, we assume those of our opponents (or those they profess) and fight them on practical, rather than ideological, grounds. Which works alright when they're preaching one thing and legislating another, but in the end we find ourselves constrained to reaction, unable to pursue our own ideals. The result? In an era where conservatives are dismantling every piece of social legislation since the New Deal, we're stuck seeing how slowly we can retreat, defending institutions that don't go far enough to fix our society's inequalities, environmental legislation that was considered a weak compromise when it passed, and rights (speech, privacy, choice) that we had thought incontestable.

If Susan Lehrer had started with the premise 'sex is good,' she could have moved on to demand that we go beyond teaching kids how to have safe sex, that we teach them how to have better sex too—how to be comfortable with their bodies and their sexuality. And when you demand something long and hard enough, people start to listen—they may not give in, but your demand will become, at the very least, a credible option. In essence, power doesn't lie in numbers, money, or institutions; power is control over the range of discourse, the ability to propose ideas and frame debate.

You can tell where the real power is at any given time by looking at who's setting the agenda. In the 1960s, it was peace-activists, civil-rights folks, the New Left, and counterculture icons—witness the

quantity of manifestoes, position papers, declarations, and lists of demands from that era. Now, the closest equivalent we've seen is the Contract On (excuse me, With) America.

Look at how Republicans tackled Social Security: they began with the question, "How can we save Social Security?" pre-empting the issue of whether it needed 'saving' at all (it didn't). Debate was between ways to downsize and privatize one of America's most effective social institutions. No one once considered allocating the insignificant amount of money it would have taken to keep the program running as is through the baby boomer bulge.

And at Wesleyan? We're letting the administration set down the terms—debating what should be in a new campus center rather than whether we be spending our money on one in the first place, discussing how restrictive to make our new party policy instead of asking whether it needs changing at all. Sometimes, we justify our initiatives according to their values. And, as Aongus Burke pointed out in his editorial in our Sex and Sexuality issue ("Free Speech My Ass," December 1997) the social discourse at Wesleyan is becoming more conservative, and we're letting that happen under the mantle of free speech.

At the beginning of this semester, when the WesDems and WesRepublicans were planning a debate on affirmative action, they promoted it by putting a comment board up in the campus center that said "What do YOU think of affirmative action?" I wrote: "The fact that you're addressing this as a matter of opinion, a debate where both sides have equal weight, constitutes the biggest attack on affirmative action this campus has ever seen."

Aongus argued that every forum has a permissible range of discourse, that it always excludes some forms of speech. Exclusion needn't include direct censorship—we censor ourselves when we think we won't be well-received. That's why most queer kids stay closeted all through high school. That's why, if your uncle's in the Navy, you may not lambast military spending over holiday dinners. That's why things you can say at Wesleyan like "Corporations are the root of all evil," "Race is socially constructed," and 'Boys suck dick,' don't translate into many other contexts. Self-censorship is the most important and least-recognized restriction on 'free speech.'

In the wake of the debacle at SUNY New Paltz, right-wing organizations started collecting course syllabi from the Women's Studies, Studio Arts, and Performing Arts Departments. Why? Intimidation. It's a message that academia is to be judged by the whims of political morality—they can't get a court order to change the curricula, but they could scare the faculty into changing it themselves. Now, some of those teachers are going to think twice about the books on their syllabi—and it won't be academic considerations making them hesitate.





THE TRIUMPH OF THE AMERICAN WAY

A Day at Six Flags Great Adventure

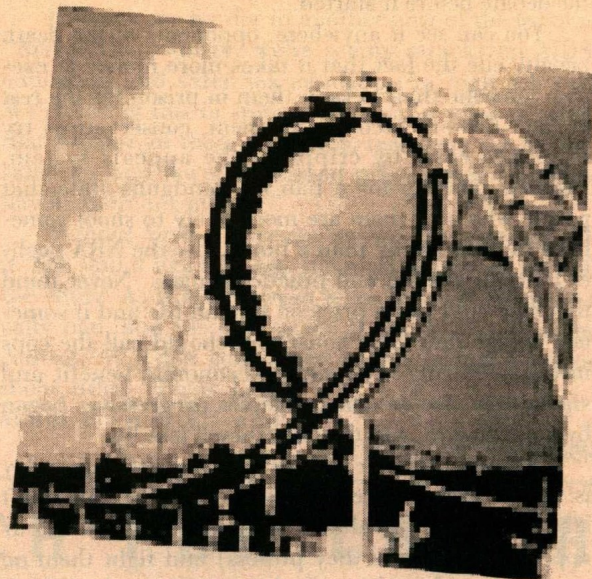
by Eyal Perlson

Last summer, my cousin from Israel came to stay with us for a week. It was a trip to celebrate her bat mitzvah, or her entrance at twelve into Jewish womanhood. My father, my stepmother and I took her frantically around New York, showing her all the wonders of our glorious metropolis. We gave her a first-class tour, complete with amusing anecdotes, historical insights, and architectural detail. She was unimpressed. She dismissed the Statue of Liberty with one quintessential Israeli "Eh!" She got bored at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and fell asleep at Miss Saigon. She gaped at the skyscrapers, but that was about it. Mostly she wanted to shop. To her, New York was just one big mall. She bought



a Mickey Mouse watch, NBA caps for all her friends, and a poster of the "Friends" cast. She bought a sweatshirt with the American flag on it, a Tommy Hilfigure T-shirt with the logo blazoned on the front, and some Gap jeans. The only thing she liked, other than the stores, was a sticky-sweet 3-D Imax film about New York. Apparently, seeing a movie about traveling around New

York was more interesting than doing it. Perhaps it was due to that obnoxious phase of adolescence, or that nonchalant attitude of so many Israelis, which seems to say, "Everything is better in the Holy land, I just traveled abroad to make sure."



About to give up, we took her to Washington DC for the weekend, reminding her, as we passed by the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial, of the many movies she had seen, such as Independence Day, where these buildings were shown. After half a day of walking around the mall, she took some picture in front of the White House, and then wanted to go back to the hotel and watch cable TV. Though she commented on the number of fat people (the morbidly obese are a rare sight in Israel) and watched with awe as portly Southerners stuffed themselves with eggs and sausages at the breakfast buffet at Howard Johnson's, she mostly looked bored and jaded. My father and I were ready to kill her. We returned to New York, vowing that for the rest of the trip we would make no great effort to entertain her. My stepmother said that the only way to impress that girl was to turn her upside down and shake her around a little. So we got in the car and took her to Great Adventure.

Six Flags Great Adventure is a colossal amusement park somewhere in New Jersey with huge roller coasters and a drive-through safari. Its slogan is that it is just as good as Disney World, and a lot closer. My brother, his friend, my cousin, and I got to the park around noon. We figured that it was the middle of the week so it wouldn't be crowded, not thinking that it was summer and this didn't matter. We handed over two Coca-Cola cans that allowed us to enter two for

one, and at my cousin's urging, exchanged some cash for Great Adventure "fun" money. We pushed past the ticket booths into the park. After marveling at a large, cement fountain, surrounded by our favorite Warner brothers cartoon characters, we headed for the rides. Part of the joy at theme parks is pretending that the employees are not human. The park helps facilitate this by dressing them up as cuddly animals. The only time I remembered that there was someone underneath the suit was when Daffy Duck or Porky Pig blurted out "Have a Great Day!" I notice that those that are paid to smile no longer say, "Have a nice day," but instead "Have a great day." I guess the former has become so hackneyed that even amusement parks won't use it.

The park was a solid mass of throbbing humanity. The noise was deafening and omnidirectional, like background radiation. It was the noise of screaming children on roller coasters, barfing up cotton candy; it was the noise of frustrated parents, getting dragged to the next gyrating metal monstrosity, sighing, "How long, Lord?"; it was the heavy breathing of teenagers suffocating under Bugs Bunny suits. And above the din, you could hear the steady hum of advertising. The PA system, in between pop songs, told us to make it a Bud Light, signs commanded us to buy a Ford, napkin holders at the food court recommended a good lawyer for a divorce. Every product advertised another: the "Batman" ride advertised the movie, the Snickers sundae advertised the candy bar, in a consumer feeding frenzy.

As we waited on interminable lines, we were led forward by television sets showing MTV videos, and of course, more advertisements. Waiting on those lines, I realized that the difference between amusement and torture was a matter of perspective. After waiting an hour for the Great American Scream Machine, exposed to the sun and the light of a thousand television sets, I became delirious. I imagined I was on line waiting to be gassed. That's what they should have had at Auschwitz, I thought, television sets.

Even the people had become walking advertisements. They sported red Marlboro caps, Guess T-



Photo Courtesy of AdBusters

OBSESSION

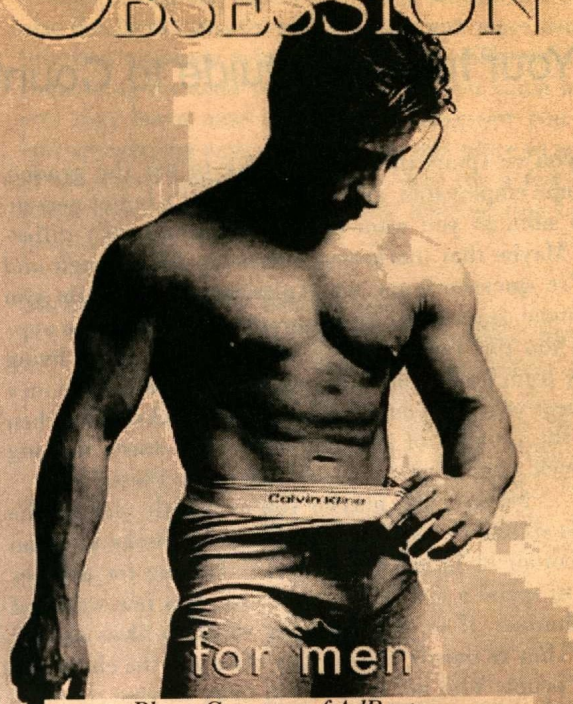


Photo Courtesy of AdBusters

shirts, Calvin Klein underwear (the waistband pulled up to the navel), tote bags from Neiman Marcus and Banana Republic, the brand name or product advertised always displayed prominently, as though that documented the worth of what they wore, and what was underneath. Perhaps the pervasive force of advertising has become too much to resist, has begun to seep into our skin, so that we become part of the noise. Perhaps in a consumer culture where we are urged to express our dissent by purchasing a super-caFFEinated soft drink or a compact disc, the only true form of rebellion is to seize the apparatus of the oppressors. Shirts that transform the Adidas symbol into a marijuana leaf, or tell us to "Enjoy Coca-ine" can be viewed in this light. Still, it is frightening that our discourse is now limited to the advertising symbols that everyone recognizes.

Back to the park. After five roller coasters, two Ferris wheels, a free-fall, and a carousel, we went home. My cousin loved it. After almost a year, it is the only thing she still talks about from her trip to America.

A few months ago, I went to Israel. My grandfather showed me with pride the new air-conditioned mall they had built in his neighborhood. It was complete with American chain stores; everything from the Gap to McDonald's. Along the mall corridors, there were wax sculptures of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Elvis. I hear they're building a new "American" theme park near Tel Aviv, with big roller coasters and faceless employees wearing furry animal suits. God help us all.





So you want to Be a Hippie

Your Internet Guide to Countercultural Vacations

So you've spent the year slaving to get the grades, become employable, and make yourself a better person. This summer you want to do something totally different. Maybe that marketing internship fell through and you're questioning your capitalist values while you scrounge deperately. Your parents aren't going to support you this time—at least not if you insist on living away from home—and you need to make a little money for next year. So you get a job at Starbucks. And when just the thought of steamed skim milk starts making you sick, you... go on a road trip to see Phish?

Maybe. But maybe you're a little sick of the whole stadium concert scene; you're too broke to go on an ecotour of Jamaica; and you're looking for another way to spend a few days, or a week, or a few weeks of the summer. If so, the following vacation ideas are for you. They're mostly cheap; they offer you the chance to meet people who are involved in more diverse countercultural pursuits than selling hemp jewelry in concert parking lots (they also offer you the chance to meet an interesting selection of honest-to-god crazy people, but that's all part of the fun); many of them give you the chance to get arrested, and some of them may even have some redeeming social value. They're also more difficult to track down than more traditional vacations, so the web sites listed here are a good place to start. The information won't necessarily be up to date, but most of them list phone numbers you can call for more info if you're interested.

Rainbow Gatherings

(<http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow.html>)

Okay, these may not be all *that* different from a Phish parking lot, but the Rainbow Family of Living Light is perhaps an even more quintessentially hippie experience. The web site lists a number of local gatherings that happen over the summer in various national parks, as well as regular drum circles in cities across the country. Rainbows pride themselves on having no official leadership, keeping informed on different areas' events through a system of "light lines" (local hot lines) and "focalizers" (people who share information on upcoming happenings with others in their vicinity). A few participants may expect the spiritual energy of their lifestyle to save the world, but in general the most politically interesting aspects of the group have to do

by Livia Gershon

with its internal organization. The unofficial family

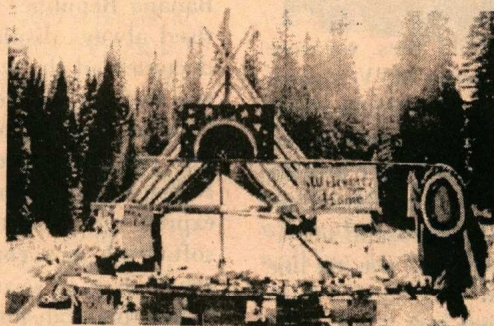
line is that there is no use of money within the gathering—everything is traded or offered for free—but many people complain this spirit is being lost as more people come just to buy drugs. At the annual national gathering, which will be held somewhere in Arizona from June 28 through July 10 this year, there will be lots of workshops, drum circles, and interactive activities, and a number of free kitchens, many catering to specific groups (e.g. non-vegetarian, drug-free, queer).

Earth First! Rendezvous

(<http://www.envirolink.org/orgs/ef/>)

The national gathering of Earth First!, called the Round River Rendezvous is held at the same time as the national Rainbow Gathering for a reason—EF! has no desire to be inundated with new-agey potheads. The RRR, which will be held somewhere in Oregon around the end of June and beginning of July this year,

includes lots of workshops dealing with the philosophy and tactics of radical non-violent environmental activism. Like the Rainbows, EF! has no official leadership, and its activities are organized mainly by its chapters. Besides local gatherings, EF! has lots of campaigns around clear-cutting, mining, nuclear waste, and other forms of corporate evil every summer, mostly



A Rainbow kitchen welcomes you "home"

involving mass demonstrations, media stunts, civil disobedience, campfires, beer, and a good sense of humor. The web page lists a few of these campaigns, and it also has a good list of local contacts who should be able to tell you what's happening in their areas. EF! once had a reputation for being racist, misogynist, and blind to the concerns of workers, but today its politics tend toward the radical left on all fronts (though participants remain almost entirely white, with the exception of a few people who make sure you know about their 1/32 Native American ancestry). Most campaigns will welcome your help for however long you want to get involved and provide you with a place to put your tent, but many will ask that you bring your own food.

Food Not Bombs

(<http://www.webcom.com/~peace/PEACTREE/stuff/stuff/HOMEPAGE.html>)



A lot of Food Not Bombs people would object to being called hippies. Several of them even go to this school. That's right, in case you didn't know, Middletown has its own Food Not Bombs chapter (see *Hermes*, February 1997). They serve hot meals every Sunday at noon in front of the Buttonwood Tree on the North End of Main Street, using mostly vegan food that would otherwise be wasted. Which, in general, is the same thing all Food Not Bombs chapters do, though some are also heavily involved in anti-militarism protests and other direct political action. The soundtrack of Food Not Bombs is less likely to be folk than punk, and there is a parallel difference in hair styles, but the group has a philosophy similar to Earth First!'s. FNB also usually has an international gathering every summer, but so far I can't find anything on this year's location. Just taking part in the regular food serving can be an easy way to find out about the most punkrock, anti-establishment things to do in a new city. Besides, chances are you can find a free place to sleep in exchange for a morning of cooking and serving. The web page has a comprehensive, but slightly outdated, list of chapters around the world. Of course, the best way to get involved in Food Not Bombs is to do it now, this Sunday, here in Middletown. To do that, call Chuck Legere at x6211.

Homes Not Jails

(<http://iww.org/housing/hnj/> (San Francisco) and <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7996/> (Boston))

Affiliated with Food Not Bombs, Homes Not Jails works with homeless people to open up abandoned buildings and make them habitable. The group also takes over buildings overtly as an act of civil disobedience, to make it obvious how much usable housing goes to waste while people sleep on the streets. (See *Hermes*, April 1997.) Last year, Homes Not Jails and Food Not Bombs held an event called Homestead '97 in Boston, bringing people from all over the country to participate in protests, workshops, and the creation of new squats. Even if nothing that big happens this year, Homes Not Jails is sure to be doing lots of energetic protests, benefit concerts, and pro-squatter events, especially in Boston and San Francisco, the US cities where the group is most active. Just keep calling the listed numbers until you find out about something fun.

Habitat for Humanity (<http://www.habitat.org/>)

Like Food Not Bombs, Habitat has a local chapter, Weshelter. Getting involved with the group is probably the best way to get to know how its work operates. In general, Habitat's local chapters build or

re-build homes, working with the people who are going to be living in them. The web page has some listings of ongoing builds that need volunteers, and it also has local contacts who can give you more detailed information about what's going on in different areas. Depending on what stage of a build you come in on, you may learn neat skills like roofing—or you may end up carrying cans of paint from one place to another all day. Chances are, if you stay for a few days you'll learn something interesting and meeting lots of people.

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival

(<http://www.michfest.com/>)

This all-women event (men are decidedly not invited), which runs from August 11-16 this year, is a bit pricier than the ones listed so far. Even at the bottom end of the sliding scale, advance tickets go from \$40 for one day to \$250 for all six. But, considering that that price includes meals, a place to camp, and a ton of music, it's not so bad. The music tends toward folk, and the workshops tend towards things like "Uteropia, Why Not?," "Making Ritual with Motherpeace Tarot," and "Intimacy and Diversity Through Movement," but in past years there have been exceptions like the punk group Tribe 8. This year's biggest names are the Indigo Girls,

Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Alice Walker (I don't know what Alice Walker does. I'm assuming she doesn't sing).

Catholic Worker Houses

(<http://www.cais.com/agf/cwindex.htm>)

Don't let the religious affiliation scare you. Most Catholic workers are serious about their beliefs, but in some cases that means Buddhism or spiritual atheism. They base their philosophy loosely on the Sermon on the Mount, as understood by anarchists Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, and they're not real close with the pope. Mostly, Catholic worker houses provide food, shelter, and/or other services to city residents. Many of them also participate in political work, especially peace and anti-nuclear demonstrations, civil disobedience, and tax resistance. Workers are usually committed to simple, communal living. The web page has help-wanted type listings from local groups that need volunteers and members, and many houses have memberships that are constantly in flux, so it probably wouldn't be hard to find somewhere to spend the summer. If you're looking for a less extensive vacation



EF! tower-sitting action



than that, most of the houses (of which there is also a complete list) welcome volunteers any time, and many of them may be able to offer a bed for a night or two.

Burning Man Project

(<http://www.burningman.com/>):

Held in Nevada August 31-September 7 this year. The basic idea is to build a huge wooden man in the middle of the desert and then burn him. In the week leading up to the burning, people create theme villages and camps and lots of bizarre art. I'm not sure I quite understand what the point is, but it's supposed to be one of the most surreal events going. So check out the web site. The festival costs \$85 dollars if you buy your tickets in advance, and more at the door.

Communes (<http://www.ic.org/>):

What hippie vacation guide would be complete without communes? This site lists intentional communities of all kinds, including co-ops (which are

a good place to start looking for cheap housing in a new location or a place to stay overnight while visiting a city) and co-housing (which is mostly long-term). It also lists lots and lots of communes, ranging from self-sufficient Christian farms to communities committed to "permanent expanded family relationships based on polyamory and polifidelity." The people who run the site really want you to buy their directory in book form, but they offer most of their listings on line. Many of the listed communities welcome guests, whom they expect to help with the chores, but some don't want random scraggly travelers wandering in. Call ahead and find out.

Well, that's all I have the energy to list, but there's plenty more where that came from (it's astonishing how full the internet is of people who want to get back to the earth). So play around on the web, have fun planning your trip, and return to Wesleyan with a new appreciation for the boring sanity of going to school.



Our Inconvenience Store

by Mike Estrin

Does anyone else find it odd that Weshop closes at 8 PM on Friday and Saturday nights? I'm sure there are a number of good reasons for this. First, it's probably hard to get students to man the store at those hours. Second, Leonard has a life when he's not busy bashing yours. And third, there isn't any demand for goods at those hours. Well, I guess there are only two good reasons.

You see, Friday and Saturday nights are the two times when Wesleyan desperately needs Weshop to be open. Sure you've taken great pains to acquire the rum and vodka from Metro (yeah don't pretend you don't know which clerk cards and which one doesn't), but in your complacency you forgot about the mixers. Weshop has a fine selection of mixers: everything from the pedestrian Coke and orange juice to the exotic Fruitopia flavors. But these fine beverages are kept under lock and key at the hours when you need them the most. Might this be a covert university policy to curb underage drinking?

Of course, there are many fine stores in the Middletown area where one can purchase mixers, but who wants to pay cash? Not to mention the fact that when your Friday night shopping list resembles the bar cart on an airplane, complete with every soda and juice known to man and a bag of Tostitos, you cannot avoid that awkward situation with the clerk. Don't get me wrong, I'm not ashamed. I just don't like the idea of looking some poor working stiff in the eye when we both know that in twenty minutes I'll be sailing with the captain. So Stop & Shop is out of the question. Weshop is the only place you can go and buy twelve different beverages and some chips without being a jerk.

And as for the munchies, who gets them at 7 PM? Could you pass the All Fruit? I don't think so! It's midnight and I want nothing more than to take my favorite Hostess product, smear it with a peanut butter fluff concoction and sprinkle those imitation skittles on top. Only at Weshop can I get that kind of service. And don't tell me to plan ahead. Who wants a chocolate peanut butter pretzel on Wednesday afternoon?

Let's face it, your options are pretty limited. You could plan ahead (yeah like that ever happens; trying to coordinate a social function at Wesleyan is like trying to see a movie in Middletown, it ain't gonna happen). Or you could go off campus. But why waste the time, money or effort? Or, third, in a haze brought on by illicit narcotics you could lead a frenzied mob to the gates of Weshop. Then with back packs in hand and ID cards nowhere to be seen, loot and pillage like it's the Gap in the middle of an LA size riot. Then and only then will your little soiree be a true success.

Now I'm not advocating theft or violence. That would be wrong. But let's remember that Weshop is not a market, it's a convenient store. Campus dining services should remember that. Start being convenient!

I'd like to make a deal. If Weshop stays open later, we'll be better customers. I don't mean we'll pay more. We all ready pay enough, but that's another article. We'll simply be more helpful. Move to the second register when the line backs up to the frozen food section. Not bitch when they run out of diet Snapple ice tea with lemon flavor. And most importantly, not sing along with the Weshop radio unless we're sure we know all the words.





BURMA

A Troubled Past

A Questionable Future

by Dan Young

In 1992, when Levi Strauss Co. was questioned about the closure of all their operations in the nation known either as Burma or Myanmar, they made the statement, "Under current circumstances, it is not possible to do business in Myanmar without directly supporting the military government and its pervasive violation of human rights." This is a fairly succinct and accurate description of the current Burmese situation.

Burma is ruled by a junta of military leaders with no channels for popular power or dissent. Despite a veil of junta assertions that Burmese martial law is currently necessary to maintain social/political stability and the security of the populace, it is becoming all too clear that the military has no intention of ever relinquishing its tight hold on the reins. The multiple large scale projects which the military has undertaken in the country (often utilizing forced, slave and child labor) have ended up serving only the economic interests of members of the junta and their friends and business partners. Burma's military rulers have made a country extremely rich in natural resources (oil, gas, and forests to begin with) one of the poorest of third world nations over all. In doing so they have perpetrated enough human rights violations to result in Amnesty International making the statement that: "Burma is a prison without bars."

Burma's political problems are at least partially the result of a century of British imperial rule. Conquering Burma in the early 1800s, Britain went on to strip many of its forests and extensively deplete its oil resources. The British protected their rule by creating an imperial army composed of native Burmese. To keep them protecting the interests of an exploitative foreign force against the dissension of their fellow Burmese, the soldiers were deeply indoctrinated into a belief in their superiority over other the

general citizenry, and of the general population.

In the 1930's the first strong Burmese liberation movement was led by the charismatic revolutionary Aung San. Aung San envisioned and outlined a new form of government which he felt was fit for Burma's individual needs: a socialist democracy which combined ideals of Buddhist philosophy, socialism and democracy. It has been said that in some of Aung San's writings he tried so hard to reconcile these seemingly disparate philosophies that he made Karl Marx sound like a disciple of the Buddha.

Burma finally gained its liberation following its occupation by the Japanese in the course of World

War II. In the country's first free elections Aung San's Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) won an overwhelming victory. But on July 19, 1947, four gunmen dressed in camouflage and armed with automatic weapons pushed their way into a meeting of the governor's executive council and gunned down seven of important members of the new government, including Aung San. These assassinations were arranged by a political opponent who had expected that removing his rivals would result in his party being called upon to create a new government. This did not happen, however, and an extremely weakened AFPFL continued to rule as Burma was officially recognized as a sovereign nation in January 1948.

The government of this newly independent Burma followed the socialist democratic model which Aung San had developed. But the model was far from perfect. Many ethnic groups in the country rallied for autonomy from this new political system which did not correspond with their own cultural ideals. Burmese socialist democracy (like many



Aung San Suu Kyi, resistance leader



post-imperialist experiments in democracy) was extremely shaky over the next few years. But there were some things for the new Burmese government to boast of — by the beginning of the 1960's Burma was the most literate country in Asia, with a lively, diverse and widespread free press.

However there was one group inside the country for whom Burma's new governmental and social structure was totally unacceptable — the native born military who had formerly been at the top of the Burmese social hierarchy. On March 2, 1962, a military coup removed the democratically elected government and passed power over to a revolutionary council headed by General Nei Win. Win went on to declare an ambiguous national censorship law under which, "Any incorrect ideas and opinions which do not accord with the times are banned."

One of the first violent acts of oppression by Win's administration came in early July when he ordered soldiers to fire upon peaceful demonstrations by the students of Rangoon University, killing between 16 and 100 students. At dawn the next morning the army blew up the University's Student's Union building, killing all students inside and symbolically destroying an important monument of the independence movement.

Since taking power, the Burmese military has continued to imprison large numbers of political dissenters. They are often put to work making products for overseas sales, or building new tourist attractions (1996 was Burma/Myanmar's "Year of the Tourist.") One Australian lawyer on vacation in Burma learned about its government's repressive measures when he saw men laboring on a construction site near his hotel who were secured with manacles on their necks, legs and chests — when he questioned one warden he was explicitly told that the men were "political prisoners." The Burmese government, however, denies any such abuse of prisoners' human rights, insisting that these prisoners have volunteered to do hard labor for the aid of their country.

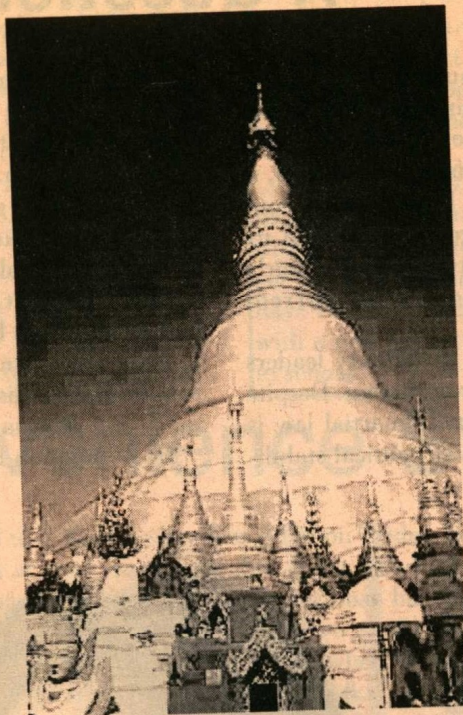
Outside of using political prisoners for slave labor, there have been many reported cases of the Burmese military forcing individuals or entire communities of people from the countryside to work on projects, and killing or torturing those who resist or who they do not think are performing up to snuff. Some of the most brutal of these stories in recent times have centered around the construction of the "New Death

Railway." The old "Death Railway" was constructed during the Japanese occupation of Burma in WWII. The Japanese army used forced laborers for the railways' construction, and its name comes from the story that for each tie on the track one Burmese worker lost their life. The plan for the "New Death Railway" was to add on 110 more miles of rail. This was meant to aid the transport of troops and materials into an area of

Burma where UNOCAL and the French oil company Total were planning to build a pipeline to transport natural gas from a deposit off-shore. Entire villages were uprooted and forced to work 30-day shifts without pay under the armed guard of Burmese soldiers. These slave laborers were provided with nothing by their military masters: they were forced to sleep on the ground, bring their own food, and deal with any medical problems on their own. In constructing the New Death Railway the Burmese military government also uprooted any settlements which might stand in the way, burning villages and forcing masses of people to emigrate to new areas. They also used forced labor tactics to construct the pipeline's future pumping station on uninhabited islands offshore, and to build another road for vehicle traffic

alongside the pipeline. Enslaved workers also serve as military porters throughout the regions where this construction is going on. Children and young women were often coerced into serving as porters, and were often raped, abused, or killed by their military employers.

The Burmese military also stands accused of grievous crimes against ethnic minorities inside the Burmese borders. In 1996 Amnesty International compiled a report on the human rights violations being perpetrated against ethnic minorities inside "Myanmar." They documented that arbitrary detainment, extra judicial execution, torture and harassment had been widely perpetrated by representatives of SLORC (the "State Law and Order Restoration Council" as the Burmese military government was known for the last decade or so, until 1998) against members of ethnic minorities in the Shan and Mon states and the Tanintharyi Division of eastern Burma. Many survivors of this abuse have now sought refuge in Thailand and gave testimony from there. Forced portering and forced labor were the main source of abuses — after being coerced into labor, many minority peoples were subsequently subject to a variety of other abuses. Also of major importance in the report was the forcible relocation of tens of thousands of Shan State residents by the military since the beginning of 1996. Some observers





feel, however, that the Burmese military isn't just using minority groups as slave labor or beasts of burden. They also believe that the military's recent massive arms build-up has the objective of waging an all out war against the nation's minority peoples.

Though the repressive rule of the Burmese military went largely un-noticed in the rest of the world during the first 3 decades of their rule, they have received increasing attention since the independence movement of the late 80's. One of the first major protests against the government which took place in Burma came in March 16, 1988, when hundreds of school children and college students banded together to march through the streets singing the national anthem of a democratic Burma, a song banned since 1962. The students marched onto the White Bridge, a causeway in the middle of the city in which they were demonstrating. When they saw the military and police forces massing at one end of the causeway, they realized that they were trapped. The nation's peacekeeping forces proceeded to enter the causeway and attack the students, first signaling out the weaker youths. The military forces beat many students to death or force them off the bridge to drown in the waters nearby. Those who were not killed were taken into custody, including a group of 42 young girls who were locked in the back of a large van and left in the mid-day sun until they suffocated.

In response to this massacre (which was given next to no international press coverage at the time) the people of Burma mobilized. Breaking former restrictions on the press, enflamed revolutionaries began cranking out a wide variety of publications. Head of the government Nei Win went on television to respond: "If there are any more demonstrations, the army will shoot to kill." Still, an emergency Congress was held in late July by the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP, the official name at the time of the organization which the military junta led) at which outgoing chairman Nei Win and other top leaders discussed the idea of moving the nation to a multiple party system. But at the time the group decided against any change in the government's structure.

On August 8 the dock workers of Burma went on strike and came together to protest the Burmese

government. People of almost every trade rapidly joined them. Soon Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of slain revolutionary Aung San returned from England to help lead a new organization of revolutionaries called the National League for Democracy (NLD). Less than a year later, on July 20, 1989, the BSPP realized just what a threat Suu Kyi's presence was. She was placed under house arrest, and ended up spending the next 6 years of her life inside her father's old house in Burma. At the same time 3000 important NLD members were arrested and imprisoned for crimes against the state.

In 1990 the BSPP allowed free elections to be held, wagering that the Burmese people's fear, loyalty and/or love for their regime would assure the current military rulers' victory. The results were something for the rebels to celebrate — 82 percent of the Parliamentary seats went to the National League for Democracy. Many of these votes were cast by soldiers and police who worked for the current administration.

But the top generals of Burma's junta refused to honor the election results and turn over power. Mass protests broke out in Rangoon and across the country, and the military was not shy about mowing down dissenters. It also was not shy about taking out doctors and nurses when they refused to turn over injured protesters to the military. Nor was it shy about forcing workers in cemeteries or crematories to bury or burn injured demonstrators alive.¹⁵

Following these outbreaks of unrest, the military junta underwent leadership changes and was given the new name of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The government's efforts to control dissent began to bring in even more Orwellian methods of control, such as laws making it necessary for a person who wishes to leave their home to travel (even for a day, even to the next town) to report to their local Law and Order Restoration Council (LORC) their destination and the person they will be staying with, and report at the LORC nearest their destination by nine o'clock that evening in order to register on the "guest list" for the person's house. Records documenting the exact number and name of people in every Burmese household are also kept (known as





"Form 10"). In this way the locations of every person in the country can be tracked. Houses in which members of the banned opposition party the National League for Democracy and their supporters are known to stay are subject to frequent checks to make sure their Form 10s and guest lists are in order. Penalties for housing or being housed as an unregistered guest can vary from heavy fines to prison sentences of up to six months. Since 1988 increasing numbers of prison sentences have been handed out in such cases. A U.S. Department of State Report dealing with Human Rights Practices for 1997 had this to say about the country's totalitarian security apparatus: "The Government justifies its security measures as necessary to maintain order and national unity. However, most major insurgent groups have reached individual accommodations with the SLORC in recent years, which provide varying levels of stability and autonomy from central government control."

The situation in Burma has changed somewhat recently, but it is hard to say that any improvements have been made as far as democracy and human rights are concerned. On November 15, 1997, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) issued a proclamation dissolving itself and replacing itself with a new State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The reason given for this change was that it would assist in the "emergence of (a) discipline-flourishing (sic) democratic system in the State and building of a peaceful, tranquil and modern developed nation." The change may be simply a cosmetic ploy to placate ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations), to which Burma was recently admitted as a member state, by making Burma's government appear less harsh, brutal, and repressive than it actually is. It may also reflect the changes that have taken place in the country in less than 10 years since SLORC was founded, in which 16 out of 17 of Burma's rebel groups have become legally recognized regional organizations. Law and order, it could be posited, have been restored, and the organization is now obsolete. However throughout most of the Burmese hierarchy the change in acronyms has meant only that new ministers from the military ranks replaced old ministers from the military ranks (when changes in ministers took place at all). Also, the new SPDC government shows no interest in working with Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. When Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw was interviewed recently by Radio Singapore International he replied to the suggestion of renewed negotiations/interactions with the National League in these words: "what we are concerned [with] is not that process...what we are now trying to build is...disciplined democracy, discipline

flourishing with democracy."

Half of the national budget of Myanmar/Burma funds the military, police and other means of repression. Since almost all of this money is raised through foreign trade, one glimmer of hope for the nation is often seen in economic/trade sanctions imposed by democratic, first world nations. Heineken, Anheuser-Busch, Levi Strauss Co., Eddie Bauer, Pepsi-Co and most recently UNOCAL and Total are among the corporations who have found it necessary for economic or moral reasons to take a stand against the Burmese military regime. The argument concerning constructive engagement (that is, staying in business with these countries and exerting pressures on them through these business relationships) is a tricky one, but most experts have concluded that it is not going to help democracy and human rights for U.S. and other first world nations to just continue doing business as usual in Myanmar/Burma.

U.S. companies currently invest the relatively small amount of \$245 million a year in Myanmar (mostly gas and oil operations), but the U.S. does grant most favored nation tariff treatment to imports from Burma. However, when the

U.S. Senate was considering legislating limits on this minimal amount of American investment due to human rights violations, it ended up bowing to the financial interests of a very small pool of investors.

In recent months there has been a frightening new development concerning trade sanction laws placed on Burma (and other nations). Because of the seeming impotence of the larger U.S. government to take stand on issues of trade sanctions, individual states have been filling in the gap. Massachusetts was the first state to pass a law creating trade sanctions/penalties against companies inside its borders who do business with Burma, and there are currently 20 different state, city and county boycott laws concerning the country. Such laws are not unprecedented — in fact they have proliferated since their first use in the American movement to help end apartheid in South Africa. But in January 1997 the European Union and Japan lodged objections against the Massachusetts law dealing with Burma, arguing that it violated the 1994 General Procurement Agreement on open contracting between the United States and the European Union, and forcing the U.S. government to defend the state's actions. Now, USA Engage, an ad hoc coalition of some 660 businesses, farm groups, and trade associations from throughout America, has indicated that it plans to file two different law suits, in separate jurisdictions (one being Massachusetts, the other most likely California, where 18 counties and 1 city have passed Burma boycott laws) attacking local laws concerning Burma. The group's argument is that the laws "hinder federal management of foreign relations and trade in violation of the US



Aung San, Buddhist revolutionary



Constitution." The immediate response to this challenge from Massachusetts Rep. Byron Rushing, a Boston Democrat and author of the Myanmar legislation, was "We're not doing foreign policy. We understand that section of the Constitution. As a state, we can decide on moral grounds who we buy from, just like an individual can." These cases could be a crucial battle in the fight to limit the ever growing power of multinational corporations.

Though Aung San Suu Kyi has won a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts, and books about her experiences can be found throughout the world, her freedom of movement is still being restricted by the government of Burma. The aforementioned 1997 U.S. State Report on Burmese Human Rights mentions that since late 1996 the government has imposed increasingly stricter limits on her freedom to leave her compound and to receive visitors. Other members of the NLD have been singled out to work in the systems of forced portering, and some have died in the deplorable labor conditions. Since May 1996 at least 340 people have been arrested and imprisoned for political reasons inside "Myanmar." NLD members are among them, and though the NLD is recognized by the government as a legal entity, many of

the party's offices throughout the country have been closed without any legal justification in recent years. An NLD conference which was to be held on May 27, 1997 to mark the seventh anniversary of the 1990 elections was stopped by members of the Burmese government who used physical force to restrain NLD members. In late 1997 the First Secretary of the SPDC government met briefly with an NLD chairman, but the Burmese government refuses to acknowledge the political positions of Aung San Suu Kyi and several other important members of the NLD.

The National League for Democracy continues to express a willingness to work with the current military leaders towards democratization. On February 16 Aung San Suu Kyi told a Burmese newspaper that the NLD is prepared to share power and form a coalition government with the military junta, so long as the military is able to make compromises and allow the NLD to choose its own representatives to the coalition. But as of now, the SPDC has not chose to take up this offer.



Letters to Hermes

To those who consider themselves progressive and well informed:

a great "WWII style war" as Newt Gingrich recently said is being waged against drugs at the expense of the notion that America is a democracy. Government propaganda and tobacco lobbyists have infiltrated our democratic process like a boil infecting skin. Slowly, our government creeps up false information to the masses, until the terrible splendor called "truth" is accepted and now longer appears as hideous.

I am speaking more specifically of the hypocrisy surrounding Proposition 215 in my home state of California. Prop. 215 was a measure calling for the legalization of medicinal marijuana. Marijuana has long been hailed for its use in treating glaucoma, its deterrent of nausea and pain experienced by AIDS and cancer patients, and encouragement of appetite for those with anorexia. This proposition was voted into law by 55% to 45% majority.

One might think that in a democracy, the laws that people vote for would be acknowledged by the federal government. This, however, is not the case with Prop 215. The day after it was passed, drug czar General Barry McCaffrey declared that any doctor prescribing medicinal Mary Jane could permanently lose their medical license. This brings me to a curious question: where does it say in our constitution that one individual has the right to overrule more than 30,000,000 voters.

"Representative democracy?" I pity the fool.

The federal government responds that legalization of medicinal marijuana would lead to the outright legalization of ganja itself. The government argues that weed, which has **never** been proven to be physically addictive nor fatal, is worse than tobacco.

The main problems cited with pot is that it causes apathy and short term memory loss, two descriptions which do not flow with the wind of profit maximization and economic growth which have now replaced the constitution as the ruling laws of America.

I find it a little bit weird that Federal government, the most capitalistic enterprise in the world, would make marijuana illegal when it could make billions of dollars in tax revenue if it were legalized and government regulated. Three reasons for this contradiction enter my head. A) the tobacco companies have realized that their profits would decrease dramatically with the legalization of grass so they have been bribing our politicians for years. B) the Federal government (probably CIA) is actually making more money off of it being illegal by selling it to other countries (conspiracy theory) or C) our government is completely moronic and does not use common sense. Any one of these premises can hold a respective torch to each other. Unfortunately, in the end, sick and the suffering get burned.

At issue is not necessarily marijuana legalization, it is about the misconception that "democracy" is the true root of the U.S.S.A.

HERMES INDEX

(With Apologies to Harper's Magazine)

1. Population of U.S. Federal Prisons in 1980: 24,363
2. Percentage who were drug offenders: 25.1
3. Population of U.S. Federal Prisons in 1994: 95,034
4. Percentage who were drug offenders: 61.3
5. Federal anti-drug spending in 1985: 2.7 billion
6. Federal anti-drug spending in 1997: over 15 billion
7. Percent of Russians favoring their present economic regime: 18
8. Percent of Russians favoring past socialist economic regime: 81
9. Percent increase in labor productivity in Russia from 1989 to 1994: -36
10. Number of votes it takes to dissolve the Russian Parliament: 1 (the president's)

Sources: 1-6: Tom Kruse, from Labor-Rap@csf.colorado.edu listserver; 7-10: "From Plan to Market," the World Bank's World Development Report (1996).

Submit!

We encourage all types of submissions: articles on campus, local, or national issues; essays; opinion pieces and editorials; art, short fiction; poetry and much more. We accept writing from students, faculty, alumni/ae, community members, and anyone else. Sorry, we do not accept anonymous submissions.

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